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Nurses' experiences and perceptions of complementary and alternative therapies for workplace stress management.

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Background: Stress levels in the nursing profession have been identified as very high and have been linked to ill health, absenteeism and presenteeism. Burnout is identified as the main reason for leaving the profession. Given the patient safety implications (more mistakes are made by nurses experiencing stress); NHS organisations are putting in place workplace wellbeing programmes. These often use complementary/alternative therapies for stress management purposes.

Objectives: (1) workplace stress management. (2) workplace stress management.

Methods: An exploratory, qualitative study using in-depth semi-structured interviews was conducted. Twelve nurses working in the Emergency Department and the Burns High Dependency Unit at a large acute hospital in England were interviewed. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data was analysed using conventional, qualitative thematic techniques involving the identification of codes and then grouping these into overarching themes. NHS ethical approval was obtained from the local ethics committee.

Results: Four overarching themes described the dataset: what makes nursing stressful; managing stress; using complementary therapies; and engagement with workplace wellbeing. Although nurses had often used complementary therapies and found them helpful in managing stress; there were barriers to accessing workplace wellbeing initiatives. For example cost, time, location and being unable to leave the unit.

Conclusions: therapies in managing stress. However, they experience barriers to accessing workplace wellbeing schemes.